

poetic art, amid the falling and the fading splendour of less creations, the Poet hath ever embodied the spirit of his Time.. Thus the most heroick incident of an heroick age produced in the *Iliad* an Heroick Epick; thus the consolidation of the most superb of Empires produced in the *Aeneid* a Political Epick; the revival of learning and the birth of vernacular genius presented us in the *Divine Comedy* with a ISTational Epick 5 and the Eeformation and its consequences called from the rapt lyre of Milton a Religious Epick.

And the spirit of my time, shall it alone be uncelebrated ?

Standing upon Asia, and gazing upon Europe, with, the<sup>1</sup> broad Hellespont alone between us, and the shadow of night descending on the mountains, these mighty continents, appeared to me, as it were, the rival principles of government that, at present, contend for the mastery of the -world. 'What!' I exclaimed, 'is the revolution of France a less important event than the siege of Troy ? Is Napóleon a less-interesting character than Achilles ? For me remains the Revolutionary Epick.'<sup>1</sup>

To the development of this great conception he now accordingly applied himself. «I live here like a hermit,' he writes to Mrs. Austen from Bradenham, 'and have scarcely seen my family. I rise at seven, and my day passes in study and composition.' A little later lie is at Southend, staying ' at an old grange with gable ends and antique windows,' \* living solely on snipes and riding a good deal,' but still 'passing his days in constant composition.' By the beginning of December he is far enough advanced to set forth his argument.

*To Mrs. Austen.*

*Dec. 1, 1833.*

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<sup>1</sup> Preface to the *Revolutionary*

